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Primary Creative Writing.

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Children will enjoy creative writing in the primary grades if they are given inspiration, time to write, and the opportunity to share their work with classmates. A second-grade class began a creative writing project by listening to poetry and selecting poems to memorize and recite. This stimulated and encouraged them to evaluate and to write poetry. Because they lacked speed and had spelling difficulties, the children were assisted by sixth-grade students acting as secretaries. Both grades benefited from this experience. Having grown more confident, the second-graders began writing on their own, and the sixth-graders became more aware of correct spelling and sentence structure. (SW)

Inspiration is one key to

Primary Creative Writing

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By VIDA JO WOOTEN

PRIMARY children can write fascinating, imaginative, and expressive compositions. All they need is a small amount of inspiration from the teacher, time set aside for writing, and an opportunity to share and enjoy their creativity with classmates.

An exciting project in creative writing began in our second-grade class in September with the children listening to poetry. Each Monday we selected our poem of the week (many times one written by a member of the class) and, as each child learned his poem, his name was placed on the bulletin board. The children were delighted with their ability to memorize poetry and say it for the rest of the class.

This activity stimulated an interest in poetry, encouraged each child's evaluation of poetry, and, finally, produced enthusiasm for writing poetry.

At the beginning of the year, these students felt limited in their story writing because of spelling difficulty and lack of speed in writing, so we got some assistance from sixth-grade students.

A former second-grade teacher at Bell Elementary in Tyler, **Vida Jo Wooten** is now coordinator of elementary instruction for the Tyler public schools. She received her bachelor's degree from North Texas State University and her master's degree from Stephen F. Austin State College.

OUR HELPERS would come to the class at their library time for 30 minutes. About half the class, working in pairs with the older children, would dictate stories while others were instructed in oral language activities. The following day the groups' activities were reversed and another group of writers came in.

The mood had been set for the writing just before lunch, so the children had an opportunity to think about their compositions during lunch time. The older students were in our room when we returned.

We asked the secretaries to take dictation, with no alterations, using manuscript writing. The children would dictate for a while, stopping occasionally to read and examine what they had said. As each child read his work, he criticized his writing. Many times he would request the change of a word or the omission of an *and* and the addition of a period.

During this time each had composed what he considered a masterpiece. The sixth-grade students enjoyed this activity as much as the second-grade students, and would go back to their class with questions concerning spelling and sentence structure.

Then came our sharing time. Ten to fifteen students were encouraged, but not required, to read their stories to the class. Those who had no compositions were extremely complimentary and occasionally pointed out grammatical errors. (This was usually done as a later language activity in order not to squelch creativity.)

Particular attention was called to any idea written in an original manner or to a unique thought expressed. These comments were contagious, and soon all the children began to notice and use different ways of saying things.

THE STORIES were typed and several copies made, with corrections in spelling and punctuation only. The sixth-grade teachers kept the pencil copies for use in their language program.

To the young readers' delight, books were made from the stories, with a preface sheet attached to the front explaining the project's objectives. Many children asked to take the books home for their parents to read, and from this activity we received many favorable notes and comments.

tached to the front explaining the sixth graders, the children began writing on their own. A free minute never presented itself that poets and authors were not at work.

They were confident in their work, and sometimes found careless errors which the older students had made in spelling or punctuation. This was a delight to them. Cautious proofreading and pride in writing became quite evident.

AFTER eight months, the children were disappointed if they could not do some form of creative writing each day, and they no longer felt a need for someone to do their writing. They even became secretaries to first-grade students.

They spent very little time away from class, but the satisfaction they got and the pride they felt for a job well done far outweighed hours of a teacher's lecturing.

I would like to share with you the first secretarial experience of the class.

(Turn to page 64)

Primary Creative Writing

(from page 24)

When the second graders arrived, the first-grade teacher had asked the children to make believe that each of them had just awakened and on their table was a pair of beautiful silver wings. These wings were just the right size, so each child was to have put them on and imagined all the things he could do.

This is the original form, spelling, and pronunciation of the stories the first-grade students dictated to their secretaries to complete the story their teacher had written on the board.

One morning when I got up I looked on the table and saw a pair of silver wings. They were just my size, so I put them on and . . .

. . . then I flew far to my friends house, gave them a ride, and took them back to there house. Then I wondered who put them there. — by Robert

. . . and I flew into the ketchen and my mother said, "Get out of here you stupid kid!" — by Sherry

. . . so I must of ben very good to dezerv a gift like this." — by Dick

. . . I went to my friend's and took them for a ride to school, I went to Fourt Smith, Arcansaw and went to my grandmother and to see if she had any choclit milk. When I got the milk, I went back to my house. My mother said, "Where did you get those wings?" And I said "I found them on my table." — by Duane

. . . I flew around the house. I fell into the kecten and landed on the stove and washed me in the singk. And then I flew outside and builded me a nest in a tree. I layed some eggs in my nest. And they hached. They hached into babys with wings. And then I went and played with the butterflies. — by Sue Mary

Mauree Applegate, author of creative writing books, tells us, "Let's not be a pattern teacher who ties leaves on dead trees, but rather a creative one who creates a climate where leaves grow naturally." ▲▲▲

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